

Key Points: Freedom Rally

January 26, 2021

Context

- Following the federal vaccine requirements that went into effect on January 15, 2022 for cross-border essential workers, a convoy of truckers are travelling across Canada, from British Columbia to Ottawa, to protest the mandate.
- A GoFundMe for the “Freedom Rally” has so far raised \$5.4 million from approximately 70,000 donors. The campaign organizer, Tamara Lich, has said that the funds will be used cover the cost of fuel, food and accommodations for the truckers. Of note, Lich is the secretary and member of the Maverick Party, formerly known as ‘Wexit Canada’, a federal political party that supports Alberta separatism.
- At this time, GoFundMe is withholding the funds raised until the organizer is able to provide document as to how the funds will be distributed.
- The social media pages for the rally indicate that donations can be made through electronic money transfers (EMTs) to the organizer’s personal bank account. Additionally, merchandise (e.g., t-shirts, flags, etc.) is being advertised for sale online, although it is unclear whether the proceeds are being used personally by the sellers or whether they are intended for donation to the cause.

Financing Implications

- In the IMVE space, FINTRAC has previously observed several instances of threat actors associated with IMVE raising funds using crowdfunding websites, as well as payments to personal accounts from crowdfunding sites.
- Open-source intelligence suggests that individuals holding broader anti-government agendas have exacerbated the sentiment being shared online regarding the rally, encouraging the use of violence in an attempt to recreate the events of the January 6 Capital Riot attack.
- At this time, it is unclear whether the funds being raised through crowdfunding will be used specifically for violent extremist attacks, considering that all IMVE attacks in Canada have been low-cost and low in sophistication. The potential for the funds being used for violent activity seems unlikely at this time considering IMVE crowdfunding is usually not used towards conducting violent activity. The funds could potentially be diverted towards legal costs should the need arise, or simply be used as stated by the organizer (i.e., for fuel, food and accommodations).

Proactive Monitoring

- SIRA is in the process of retrieving reports from internal data holdings that may be associated with funding for the “Freedom Rally” and closely monitoring the events in partnership with Intel considering its nexus to IMVE and the potential of escalation.

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